(a) the policy for one-time payment of road tax for different categories of vehicles;

(b) whether there are State-wise variation; if so, the details thereof and under what provisions of law;

(c) the status of a vehicle for payment of road tax, if one-time is paid in a State, say in Maharashtra or Gujarat, and then the vehicle shifts to another State, say to West bengal or Bihar; and

(d) whether the road tax is to be paid again; if so, under what provision, and action Government proposes to bring uniformity?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the Rajya Sabha.

Fund for Upgradation of State Highways

124. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have sanctioned fund for the upgradation of some State Highways during 1997-98;

(b) whether World Bank has also provided fund for the same purpose; and

(c) if so, the State-wise details of the Highways accorded fund sanctioned from the Central Government as well as World Bank?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Details of State Highways/Express Highways Funded by Central Government

125. SHRIMATI JAYANTI PATNAIK: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the details of the State Highways/ Express Highways and State Roads of economic importance of different States funded by the Government during 8th Five Year Plan;

(b) the Highways and State Roads identified in Orissa and other States for Central funding for repairing and upgradation during 9th Five Year Plan; and

(c) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Under the Centrally sponsored scheme of E&I sixteen (16) projects involving central share of appx. Rs. 50 crores have been finally sanctioned during the 8th plan.

(b) 9th Plan is yet to be finalised.

(c) Does not arise.

Research and Technology in the field of Geo-Synthetics

126. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the geo-synthetics, the new construction material is being successfully used for various civil engineering works including construction of roads in U.S. and other countries;

(b) whether India has started its research and technology in the field of geo-synthetics;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) the steps taken for setting up of geo-synthetic manufacturing industries in India, especially in hill areas and natural disaster prone areas?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T. G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) yes, Sir. Considerable research has been carried out by various Institutions in India. GEO-synthetics has been used in construction of reinforced

soil wall, drains, overlay and erosion prevention measures, etc. in limited cases because of its high costs.

(d) Setting up of manufacturing units in private sector depends upon market economy and demand for the material. There is no proposal on the part of the Govt. to start any such unit.

Agreements with foreign Shipping Companies to Strengthen Container services

127. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANAPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Shipping Corporation of India has signed certain agreements with foreign shipping companies to strengthen container services between Indian subcontinent and Northern Europe during the last three years and as on date; and

(b) if so, the details of the agreements company-wise/year-wise and the achievements made thereby?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Shipping Corporation of India Ltd. (SCI) has signed an agreement with M/s. Zim Israel Navigation Company Limited (ZIM) in July, 96. This agreement provides for swapping of slots on each other's ships in proportion to the container capacity/dead weight capacity contributed by each partner. With the induction of one container vessel by ZIM, Israel, under this agreement in addition to 3 cellular container ships by SCI, SCI can now offer better frequency of service on India UK continent (UKC) sector.

Now, SCI also covers one more port of call viz. Barcelona (Spain) enabling it to cater to West Mediterranean and South American trade also.

SCI and Zim signed a MOU with Ceylon Shipping Corporation (CSC) of Sri Lanka in September 96. This agreement provides for swapping of certain slots between SCI-ZIM and CSC enabling SCI to move any container directly from Mumbai to UKC and vice versa.

Central Assistance for development of Minor ports

128. SHRI SANJAY NIRUPAM: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government of Maharashtra has demanded Central assistance for the development of minor ports in the State with participation from private sector;

(b) if so, the details thereof including the response of the Central Government thereto;

(c) whether similar demand has come forth from other States; and

(d) if so, the details thereof including the extent to which such assistance has been given to other States?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI T.G. VENKATRAMAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Government of Maharahstra reqested the Government of India for assistance of Rs. 125 crores during the 9th Plan period. The responsibility for development of minor ports is vested primarily with the State Governments. However, the Government of India has now formulated a scheme for giving assistance to the Maritime States for development of Minor Ports, to be implemented from the year 1997-98 onwards. A budgetary provision of Rs. 2 crores has been made for the year 1997-98. The details of the scheme have been circulated to all the maritime States. The State Governments have been requested to submit their proposals, but so far no such proposal has been received by the Government of India.